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The Thematisation of Public Space – a Problem or a Necessity?

Abstract: This work seeks to examine the thematisation process of revitalized spaces. This phenomenon is increasingly visible in Poland, a country where urban renewal and post-industrial spaces were not considered on a large scale until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The issue presented is based on the following examples – Gdańsk Shipyard, Kazimierz and Nowa Huta in Krakow, and Nikiszowiec estate in Katowice.

Key words: disneylandization, gentrification, public space, revitalization, thematisation

The development of cheaper and faster means of transport, improvement of information flow processes and extended access to free time during the last 100 years, have been the reason for the rapid growth of mass tourism. However, the number of places, available to tourists is limited – due to financial and time reasons. Nowadays, tourist centers compete with one another to attract tourists, which is not an easy task. The tourists of today have very high expectations – they do not only want to visit landmarks, but also get to know the local cuisine, culture and traditions of the visited countries. When leaving a country they want to have the feeling that they have really explored that part of the world, even if they have spent there only a short period of time. To present public places under a certain theme (in this article called “thematisation”) or to transform them into an amusement park, (a phenomenon known as disneylandisation), are strategies which may help to make a site more attractive and more mentally accessible to visitors.

Piotr Lorens defines disneylandisation as a process based on replacing real space by its unreal and safe equivalent where the new place lacks any characteristics of the original and is created of new parts emerging from nowhere.¹ In another article Lorens writes that thematisation is a conscious and intentional action, transforming a given space into architectural forms referring to old times or other civilizations, which is related to the creation of an urban spectacle for mass audiences.² Although Lorens equates disneylandisation with the thematisation of public places, in this article the two terms are not used synonymously. The main reason for this decision is that the following examples are mostly connected with cultural heritage, exploiting the history of the space and its authenticity rather than creating unreal spaces – so the term thematisation seems to be more suitable.

Lorens distinguishes the following categories of theme spaces:

1. Theme space in the strict sense:
 - a. historical complexes,
 - b. commercial, shopping and entertainment complexes,
 - c. theme parks (built from scratch).
2. Stylized space:
 - a. new urban structures built according to historic plans,
 - b. rebuilt old town complexes.³

The difference between the above categories is mainly to consciously create an omnipresent narration focusing the audience's attention; an aspect which does not take place in a stylized space. The transformation may refer to façades of buildings, interiors of restaurants and cafes, arrangements of public space, sales of goods and services, and hosting events as well. Nowadays, the thematisation of public space has become a basic tool which makes it possible to create a unique space in a relatively short period of time. Thematisation is based on specific features, which compete for the attention of investors, tourists or future citizens. This strategy is useful from the observers' point of view. According to the researchers (e.g. Guy Debord) we are becoming more and more a society of spectacles, because everything which could be directly experienced in the past, had disappeared and now only exists in the form of spectacles.⁴

¹ P. Lorens, "Rewitalizacja miast w Polsce. Pierwsze doświadczenia," in: M. Stangel, *Odnawianie miast w społeczeństwie informacyjnym. Technologie informacyjne i komunikacyjne w procesach rewitalizacji*, Gliwice 2009, p. 34.

² P. Lorens, *Tematyzacja przestrzeni publicznej miasta*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.

⁴ G. Debord, *Spółczesność spektaklu oraz Rozważania o społeczeństwie spektaklu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 33.

This article points out a variety of examples presenting thematisation of public places. Most of them refer to the revitalization of historical housing complexes. However, these examples are not so extreme as the public space examples of disneylandisation in the United States. Sometimes they are even missed by tourists, but they still are more and more influential on the process of the Polish cultural heritage management.

The revitalization activities in Poland started at the end of 1990s. Many branches of industry collapsed during the times of transformation from central planning to capitalism. Problems with the degradation of city centers and blocks of flats followed. The authorities tried to revitalize the space or give it new functions. At the beginning those actions merely focused on the façades of buildings, and only later a broader spectrum of aspects was taken into account – social, economic, cultural, and ecological ones.⁵ It is important to remember that when carrying out the revitalization processes it is vital to consult the residents of the area.

Gentrification of space, defined as the replacement of economically weaker citizens by wealthier individuals⁶ is a very negative process. Marginalized residents, often suffering from alcoholism, long-term unemployment, and gaps in education, are moved to other parts of the city. However, resettlement does not solve people's problems and often leads to an escalation. After a while, finding a solution can become even more difficult, as growing areas of pathology accumulate new problems. However, thinking only about the revitalized area, resettlement is a very advantageous solution – the problem of unwelcome neighbors disappears, and what follows is the inflow of the well-off people. They can afford to pay rent on time and thoroughly remodel the apartments they bought. The surrounding area welcomes new pubs, and restaurants and offices representing creative industry open. Day by day the image of the area changes – the place becomes popular and the prices of premises increase rapidly. But together with the old citizens, who had lived there for generations, history, customs, traditions and local heritage disappear.

The continuity of historical narration is broken – the number of citizens who remember the stories from the past, and still live in the district, is decreasing. Every place is closely connected to its history and the unique story created by its locals. That is the reason why the thematisation phenomenon

⁵ A. Jadach-Sepiolo, "Rewitalizacja miast w dokumentach strategicznych w Polsce. Odniesienie do projektu Krajowej Strategii Rozwoju Regionalnego 2010–2020: Regiony, miasta, obszary wiejskie," in: K. Skalski (ed.), *O budowie metod rewitalizacji w Polsce – aspekty wybrane*, <http://149.156.173.214/pliki/e-monografie/monografia-2.pdf> [accessed on: 20 December 2012], p. 21.

⁶ P. Lorens, „Specyfika procesów przekształceń i rewitalizacji różnych obszarów zdegradowanych w miastach polskich,” in: P. Lorens, J. Matyniuk-Pęczek, *Wybrane zagadnienia rewitalizacji miast*, Gdańsk 2009, p. 13.

has come into being. Usually thematisation is applied to areas whose history is very difficult and complicated, for example, areas which belonged to other countries before World War II or areas whose inhabitants were exterminated, areas which are immediately associated with the old regime, and also those where nationalistic conflicts are still alive. The history of those places is rather not mystified, but presented in a simplified version. We are provided with a message easily interpreted by the masses.

The thematisation of public space does not only mean creating and reinterpreting history, but primarily making up “cultural products” which correspond to the customers’ ideas and concepts. That transformation is characterized by features like novelty, completeness, readability and cultural values. The authors of “The report about the functioning of the heritage protection system in Poland after 1989” noticed that traditional monuments, being both pieces of art and historical documents, are gradually becoming less valuable from the cultural tourism point of view. Characteristics like uniqueness, antiquity, authenticity are losing their importance. Instead, cultural products, which are accepted by the customer, are created.⁷ In the introduction to his book “Commercialism of cultural tourism” Mirosław K. Leniarek points out, that the desire to make the offers for tourists more and more attractive, causes culture to take the form of a script and a theatre production. According to present trends every spatial and social phenomenon is exploited for show, and the ‘McDonald society’ is presented with a carnival space created by marketing departments. Real culture is replaced by popular culture and style is displaced by ephemeral fads.⁸ As a consequence, we have to deal with the cultural tourism industry, which is based on natural advantages of particular space and develops products clearly aimed at the customer. The specific and historical attributes of the space are only used as slogans, around which a lot of additional attractions may be built, and which are mostly visualized as common stereotypes.

The gentrification phenomenon can be thoroughly examined on the example of the old Jewish district in Krakow, called Kazimierz. Fifteen years ago that area was very dangerous and many people were afraid of entering the district. Nowadays it is full of life 24 hours per day. Ruined tenement houses were changed into new apartments, cafes and restaurants. The district became one of the most fashionable places in Krakow. Kazimierz has become a must see in every city tour, right after the Main Market Square. But, in a broader context, the gentrification of the area is not a positive phe-

⁷ J. Purchla (ed.), *Raport na temat funkcjonowania systemu ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego w Polsce po roku 1989*, [http://www.kongreskultury.pl/library/File/RaportDziedzictwo/dziedzictwo_raport_w.pelna\(1\).pdf](http://www.kongreskultury.pl/library/File/RaportDziedzictwo/dziedzictwo_raport_w.pelna(1).pdf) [accessed on: 21 March 2013], pp. 12–14.

⁸ M.K. Leniarek, *Komercjalizm turystyki kulturowej*, Wrocław 2008, p. 7.

nomenon. The prices of the apartments suddenly skyrocketed. The obsession with the revitalization of this place brought about some peculiar results; for example new apartments were built adjacent to the old Jewish grave yard. The façades of tenements were insulated with polystyrene and in addition to that signboards, stylized as pre-war advertisements of Jewish shops, were mounted. The former inhabitants of Kazimierz, mostly poor, could not afford to pay high rents. For that reason they moved to other districts or were resettled there. Due to the increasing costs of rents, small shops and service points had to close. They were replaced by very expensive restaurants and cafes, however, only newcomers can afford to frequent them. As there was no official plan for those changes, construction laws were often overstepped. This is unacceptable for an area which is under special protection being on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Nowadays tourist facilities are still on an insufficient level of development, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the number of tourists has rapidly increased.⁹ The fact that the district was a place where resettlers from other parts of Poland moved after II World War, is not mentioned. More attention was dedicated to the pre-war, Jewish tradition because of a bigger marketing potential.¹⁰ Of course, there are some positive examples of well considered and planned heritage management, but most of the activities are focused on creating easy to sell products for tourists. Nobody cares about their authenticity. Some of the negative examples are: kosher restaurants, Klezmer music concerts or the souvenir industry whose main goal is to meet the customers' expectations that sometimes lack any connection to the original Jewish culture.

After the revitalization process Kazimierz district became an artistic area. At the end of the 1990s, more and more cafes and pubs started their activity there as they could pay low rents. Since then the restaurants do not only function as meeting places, but also as actively working culture institutions, cooperating with local community. One of these places, "Alchemia," is located near Nowy Square. In 2008 one of the owners – Jacek Żakowski complained in a local newspaper about commercialism flooding the district. He said that he was annoyed by the shallowness and mediocrity of what was happening there. He stressed that he did not only run a café there, but he actually lived in the district.¹¹

⁹ *Szanuj menela swego! O rewitalizacji*, <http://www.mojemiasto.org.pl/zalozenia-projektu/szanuj-menela-swego-o-rewitalizacji/> [accessed on: 23 June 2013].

¹⁰ *Podmiotowość dzielnic. Między gentryfikacją a rewitalizacją cz. 2* (2010), <http://wieloryp.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/podmiotowosc-dzielnicy-miedzy-gentryfikacja-a-rewitalizacja-cz-2/> [accessed on: 23 June 2013].

¹¹ A. Wityński, J. Żakowski, "Kolonizatorzy Kazimierza," in: M. Kursa, W. Pelowski, R. Romanowski, *Zrób to w Krakowie*, Kraków 2012.

In Marek Soból's book "Mojry," published three years earlier, one of the main characters explains how she sees the district in future:

[t]he Kazimierz of drunken artists certainly will change in a few years, like the Parisian Montmartre and Montparnasse. Today, more and more tourists are coming to visit the place. During weekends all pubs are controlled by corporation warriors, flocking from Warsaw after a long week of making money to catch up on drinking alcohol. At a first glance the difference will be imperceptible, but step by step the streets will be more crowded, the tips will increase, the topics of conversations at the tables will change, and the culturally valuable element will slowly move elsewhere, maybe to the district of Podgórze.¹²

Today that vision has become reality. There are less authentic places in Kazimierz's pub landscape, which can be proud of what some people called "the spirit of the place". Instead, we find more commerce, mass and populism. Let's hope that Podgórze, which has now become a more frequented place, will not have to share the fate of Kazimierz.

Nowadays the citizens of Kazimierz complain more frequently about inconveniences connected with living in that district. Loud noises from beer gardens and pubs, aggressive and drunken customers, increasing prices in local stores, all manage to deter both, current and future tenants.¹³ The number of District I citizens (including the Old Town and Kazimierz), has decreased since 2004 by 24%,¹⁴ which clearly shows the tendency of a depopulating city center. It is quite possible, due to continued lack of government reaction, that in a few years a re-revitalization of Kazimierz and the Old Town will be necessary.

The example above perfectly illustrates the fact that thematisation, which generates gentrification of the area, an increase of tourist traffic and growth of income for local companies, yields some good, but short term effects. Long-term results are rather negative, and the municipal authorities will have to face them sooner or later.

Another example of space thematisation is the high-profile reconstruction of the Gdańsk Shipyard gate. The photo of Lech Wałęsa, standing this gate, and speaking to the crowd of workers became a symbol of the strikes in September 1980. During the pacification of Gdańsk Shipyard by ZOMO (Motorized Reserves of Citizens' Militia) forces in December 1981, the historical gate number 2 was destroyed by a tank.¹⁵ Until recently, only few people knew that the gate, which had been kind of worshipped, was not an authentic object.

¹² M. Soból, *Mojry*, Warszawa 2005, p. 146 (transl. A.P.).

¹³ M. Razowska, "Martwa dzielnica? Coraz mniej mieszkańców na Kazimierzu," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 August 2013.

¹⁴ Obliczenia własne na podstawie Biuletynu Informacji Publicznej Miasta Kraków, http://www.bip.krakow.pl/?bip_id=1&mmi=465 [accessed on: 29 October 2013].

¹⁵ D. Karaś, "Stocznia Gdańska znowu będzie imienia Lenina," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 March 2012.

In 2010 a Polish artist – Dorota Nieznalska, won the Art Biennale in Gdańsk “Tożsamość miejsca” (“Identity of the Place”). As an award she was given the possibility to organize her own exhibition. She started researching the historical fate of the famous Gdańsk Shipyard gate. After a careful analysis of many sources, Nieznalska came to the conclusion that the actual gate, regarded a symbol of struggle and martyrdom in Gdańsk Shipyard, was not original. The impulse to work on this subject was the picture “No pasaran!” taken by her father on 14th of December 1981. That picture shows shipyard workers forming a kind of a “live gate” with their bodies, protecting their workplace against the intervention of the police. Nieznalska tried to reconstruct the shape of the gate before the 16th of December 1981, when it was crushed by a tank. The analysis of historical documents (mainly photos), allowed her to make a credible reconstruction of the gate’s left wing. The iconographic materials relating to the right wing had unfortunately not been preserved. The artist reconstructed the right wing based on interviews with witnesses of those events, believing that memory also represents a carrier of truth. Moreover, Nieznalska wanted to point out that it is impossible to draw or define a dividing line between truth and fiction.¹⁶

Gdańsk administration realized the promotional potential of the gate and reconstructed it to its original form of September 1980 for 68,000 zlotys. Nieznalska, at the request of the local government, consulted the project with architects.¹⁷ The inscription “Gdańsk Shipyard Stock Company” was replaced by the words “Lenin’s Shipyard.” A metal banner of Work Order, a placard at the entrance saying “Workers of all factories unite,” and a second one at the exit saying “Thank you for your good job” were added. Strike postulates can be read on the gate, painted in grey – the color of the original construction.¹⁸ According to the words of Paweł Adamowicz, the president of Gdańsk, it was high time to remember that it was the place of the Solidarity’s peaceful revolution – one of the most important events of social history in the twentieth century. And all that was needed to preserve it was a simple reconstruction.¹⁹ Adamowicz’s decision to rebuild the gate was connected with A. Wajda’s film production about Lech Wałęsa (the leader of the strike and later Polish

¹⁶ M. Bieniek, *Miasto – artystka albo de-konstrukcja przemocy. O wystawie „Miasto-zdanie. Re-konstrukcja przemocy” Doroty Nieznalskiej*, <http://www.nieznalska.com/biblio.html> [accessed on: 30 January 2013].

¹⁷ *Po wystawie Nieznalskiej rekonstrukcja bramy stoczni*, <http://tvp.info/informacje/kultura/po-wystawie-nieznalskiej-rekonstrukcja-bramy-stoczni/6670514> [accessed on: 30 January 2013].

¹⁸ “Zdjęli ze stoczni napis im. Lenina. Policja żąda wyjaśnień,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 August 2012.

¹⁹ D. Karaś, “Stocznia Gdańska znowu będzie imienia Lenina,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 March 2012.

president), and it was supposed to serve as a kind of scenography. That gate may also be seen as a kind of theatrical entrance to the European Center of Solidarity.²⁰

Such an approach to the problem is symptomatic – only the facilities are renovated. Even if they have a symbolic potential, they cannot replace all the other activities connected with the place or event, like for example, honoring the historical memory of generations. The words of Marian Kwapiński – Monument Conservator from Pomorze Voivodship are equally poignant: “[i]n the case of such objects as gate number 2 or the BHP hall [the hall where the agreement between the workers and the government was signed – A.P.], we don’t protect material value, but a symbolic message. If we go back to the original appearance of the gate and its surroundings, the historical monument will not get hurt.”²¹ Is it only possible to protect the symbolic message by reconstructing a material building? Which monument are we talking about when we think about the destroying of the historical gate? The arguments presented by the government of Gdańsk seem to be unclear. On the one hand they want to preserve the memory of the historical event by reconstructing the building, on the other hand they declare that intangible values are more important. However, no activities are undertaken to pass the memory about the strikes on to next generations.

When reconstructing the gate, the government of Gdańsk did not take into consideration one very important aspect of that case – Gdańsk Shipyard is still functioning as a factory. The events of September 1980 are relatively recent, and many people who participated in those actions are still alive and may be interviewed as witnesses. It is probably the reason why the place did not undergo the process of “museification.” Former and present workers of the shipyard and the activists from “Solidarność” took concrete actions to restore the previous form of the gate. “Solidarność” was against any changes from the beginning and three Deputies from Pomerania submitted a notice to the prosecutor about felony for spreading communist ideas. The court dismissed the case, taking into consideration the opinion of the local government stating that the gate is a witness to history and has a unique status and value.²² “Solidarność” activists first tried to use the union’s flag to cover the inscription with the name of the shipyard’s patron, but in the end decided to remove it after the 31st September anniversary. Karol Guzikiewicz, deputy head of the shipyards’ “Solidarność,” argued: “[i]n 1990, together with a group of ship-

²⁰ M. Sandecki, “Walka z Leninem trwa. Co zrobić z napisem nad bramą,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 May 2012.

²¹ D. Karaś, “Stocznia Gdańska znowu będzie imienia Lenina,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 March 2012 (transl. A.P.).

²² “Zdjęli ze stoczni napis im. Lenina...” (transl. A.P.).

yard's workers we removed the inscription "Lenin's Shipyard" from the gate, and it was a very big event for each of us. I cannot understand why the mayor of Gdańsk heats up the atmosphere and thus provokes social problems. For us, especially for the older shipyard workers, this is a provocation!"²³

The sources of this conflict can be attributed to a different understanding of heritage protection. The city officials decided on a direct approach – they forced the reconstruction of the 1980s to protect the memory of people and events. The participants of these events preferred a different, less direct way to remember the uprising. For them the restoration of communist symbols on the gate was not a mark of honor and respect for their actions, but reminded of those hard moments in history they would rather forget about. Provided by this example we may risk the statement that involving the public is very important in building and sustaining the local identity. The officials focused on renovating the object in order to trigger changes in consciousness of the people without any other interventions, however the citizens preferred to take genuine and authentic actions to keep the memory of the event alive the way they wanted it to be. The thematisation of the shipyard area was a move performed to attract tourist attention. The goal of the Gdańsk authorities was to take every visitor of the European Center of Solidarity back in time to the era of Polish laborers strikes and risings. Therefore greater effort was put in creating a spectacle to charm the visitors, rather than in preserving the authenticity of the place. It cannot be denied that although the gate is not the authentic object from September 1980, it became a witness of many other important events in the Gdańsk Shipyard, during the years that followed.

In this context Dorota Nieznańska's work of art is even more interesting. While conducting research about the Gdańsk Shipyard gate, which became a symbol of past events, she was struggling with a myth. Through her historical researches she proved that the object which was believed to be original was, in reality, a fake. For years the gate had been a monument immortalizing the shipyard's workers' strikes. It was also the symbol of freedom and of Poland's historical role in the process of destroying communism. Although it proved to be inauthentic, that fact was not widely discussed in media. The controversial personality of the artist a more widespread debate than the work of art she presented. The workers did not feel that someone had taken away their history and heritage. The memory of those events was still in them and they did not need any external symbols to confirm the existence of it. They were, however, outraged by the change of gates. The significance of the protests and the memory of murdered co-workers is deeply rooted in

²³ M. Sandecki, "Odwołanie za Lenina. 'S' grozi prezydentowi Gdańska," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20 April 2012 (transl. A.P.).

them. For that reason they thought that the exposure of communist symbols they fought against is inadequate and unnecessary.

A much more interesting piece of art referring to the Gdańsk Shipyard was designed by Iwona Zając, who revealed and collected individual, often intimate stories about the factory. The artist abandoned the gallery's premises and was looking for a special place which would facilitate a more widespread reception of her work. She selected one of the walls surrounding Gdańsk Shipyard, and created a mural covering a surface of 250 square meters. It shows shipbuilders' quotes about the significance of the Shipyard in their lives, recorded by the artist during their interviews. In these expressions it is easy to notice an indescribable contrast between "the hugeness of the workplace and the intimate memory of it."²⁴ The shipbuilders cared about the relationships between their fellow workers, and had the feeling that the factory was their own property. Many times a note of nostalgia can be heard. The reader learns that the shipbuilders did not complain about their lives, they did not wait for miracles, they only wanted jobs and decent wages for themselves and the future generations. We have to realize that the work of Iwona Zając is only a part of the reality. She conducted interviews only with some of the workers, and for the mural she picked out only those parts, which she considered suitable for her project. Despite this fact we regard her work as something authentic, relating directly to the experiences of shipbuilders, re-processing the history and showing it from a different perspective. The participation of workers in the artistic activity became a confirmation of truth, in contrast to the externally imposed reconstruction of the gate.

Attempts to exploit memory and focus it around stereotypical associations, similar to the activities in Gdańsk, can also be tracked in other areas marked by uprisings during communism in Poland. One example of that is the action of RMF FM radio station, organized on 22nd July 2011, at the anniversary of one of the communist celebrations. In Aleja Róż in Nowa Huta, Kraków, a polystyrene dummy of the original Lenin's monument was put up in place of the former monument. The organizers wanted to see the reaction of the residents to the return of the communist symbol.²⁵

Łukasz Stanek points out that simulations have always been a favored way to present the district of Nowa Huta. From the beginning of its existence, there has always been a big difference between how the area looked like in re-

²⁴ <http://www.straus.bzzz.net/stocznia.bzzz.net/> [accessed on: 31 January 2013] (transl. A.P.).

²⁵ Ł. Stanek, "Nowohuckie symulacje. Polityka tożsamości i konsumpcja przestrzeni w Nowej Hucie," in: M. Kaltwasser, E. Majewska, K. Szreder, *Futuryzm miast przemysłowych. 100 lat Wolfsburga i Nowej Huty*, Kraków 2007, pp. 297–298.

ality and the way it was portrayed in the propaganda media.²⁶ The municipality, designed by Tadeusz Ptasiński, was supposed to produce an ideal socialist citizen, satisfying all his needs in the newly established settlement unit, with the Arka Pana church built as a concession made to the citizens, who battled for the erection of the Nowa Huta cross.

The Cracow company – Crazy Guides, which organizes tours for foreign tourists around Nowa Huta, presents the district as a socialist open-air museum, where nothing has changed since the communist era.²⁷ The tour taken in an old socialistic Trabant car involves watching a propaganda movie, visiting an apartment of those times and the legendary restaurant – Stylowa, including vodka and sour cucumbers tasting accompanied by a disco-polo band performing songs from the 1980's. All that in the company of the crazy guides team.²⁸ When visiting Nowa Huta, tourists get the impression that time stands still there. Moreover, they get a misshaped view of communism as focused on continuous enjoyment. The tours completely ignore other, very important aspects of the district's overall picture. In addition the company hires residents of the area as untrained actors for the performances. Mechanics, waiters, tenants of the visited apartments are usually unaware of what they are participating in. They become an object of observation, a funny exhibit in a "museified" space, in which the old-fashioned style guarantees fun. Through actions like Crazy Tours, the past events that molded the residents and the city are discredited.

It is worth to rebuild, strengthen and protect local identity in a revitalization process, because the relations formed there represent a reference point for those prevailing in modern cities.

Apart from architectural planning of cities or housing estates that are to be utmost functional and surrounded by greenery (the garden city concept), and thus much more friendly for residents than the contemporary housing projects or enclosed housing complexes, it is worth to think about the special relationship that arises among people who work in the same factory, a phenomenon not to be found in large urban areas.

We see an even more complex issue with the citizens of Nikiszowiec project in Katowice. The residents of the area do not only share the same place of work, but also language, religion, traditions, and practices, which helped them to define a collective identity. The picturesque nature of the Nikiszowiec estate with an added value of a revitalization process seems to invoke a rapidly growing interest for the district. It did not only become an obligatory point of every

²⁶ See also: *Kierunek – Nowa Huta!*, A. Munk, Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych, Warszawa, 1951.

²⁷ Ł. Stanek, *op. cit.*, pp. 297–298.

²⁸ <http://www.crazyguides.com/> [accessed on: 14 February 2013].

trip to Silesia, but also a movie set, and a setting in different books. Together with the increasing popularity of the place and a rush of tourists, the process of commodification of the area has started. For example, one company offers “Nikiszowiec Apartments” to let, which in an area with working class traditions, seems to be a very unusual idea. According to the owner, that housing development is “[t]he unique opportunity to rent luxury apartments in the local conditions of Nikiszowiec estate. The apartments are decorated in the traditional Silesian style, in combination with modern convenience, which makes you feel the atmosphere of the Silesian culture.”²⁹ The owner adds, “[i]f you visit us you will experience many characteristic diversities of the area – from unique architecture, through remains of communism, up to luxuriously furnished interiors, where you have a chance to spend a unique evening.”³⁰ Hotel guests in that district, for example, have the opportunity to prepare their own Christmas Eve supper in the company of a “charming Silesian hostess of 2003” or take part in a cooking course according to the method of Five Elements (“the goal of the workshop is to clarify the rules of traditional Chinese medicine”).³¹ The combination of luxury apartments and a poor district, which still cannot ensure the security of its citizens and, to make it even worse, traditional Chinese medicine in Silesian style, definitely do not go together. From the great variety of Silesian culture, only the elements clearly associated with the region (like interior design or local cuisine) were selected, being additionally were enriched by popular novelties which, from the apartments owners’ point of view, would attract more clients. The product was designed without any care about authenticity; its only aim is to target consumers’ needs.

The popularity of the district has had a negative impact on the locals of Nikiszowiec. The tourists, delighted by the charm of the district, variety of the culture and naturalism of the tenants, started to overstep the private space of citizens and treat them as an element of the landscape: moving and colorful exhibits. A photo studio website shares pictures from wedding sessions.³² The photos present the bride and groom, who are contrasted with local citizens. The images show older people, modestly dressed, during daily duties, sad, indifferent or at most surprised what happens next. The people from Nikiszowiec estate were treated by the photographers as “local flavor,” aborigines, who can serve the role of an original background to make the photo more entertaining. The locals were most probably not even asked for permission to have their photographs published on a website, so the whole idea

²⁹ <http://www.katowice-nikiszowiec.pl/> [accessed on: 20 December 2012] (transl. A.P.).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² <http://fotopracownia.com/blog/2012/05/15/sesja-slubna-katowice/sesja-%C2%9Cklubna-w-nikiszowcu-sesja-plenerowe-katowice-nikiszowiec-5/> [accessed on: 4 January 2013].

may even be illegal. Moreover, they only serve here as elements of a specific landscape and somehow stop being autonomous individuals.

The thematisation of public space is a tendency which will increase and be more visible in the future. In combination with the trend of treating historical monuments as culture commodities, and due to the pressure exerted by governments to realize revitalization projects as quickly as possible – the gentrification of districts becomes a necessity. The resettlement of citizens, who had been living in the revitalized areas for generations, is not only connected with the creation of new enclaves of pathology, but also with the destruction of historical continuity of a particular space and depraving the area of the guards of heritage that had been there for generations. As a consequence, history becomes shallower as only simple images are created to be easily understood by the mass audience. On a global scale, every place will look the same and it will be very hard to make out differences between various tourist attractions in the future.

It must be noted that opposite tendencies also exist – actions aimed at resuscitating a district and supporting its residents. Those activities make an effort to cultivate traditions and protect heritage, to highlight the importance of place's authenticity and refer to its uniqueness. According to the principle of sustainable development, promoted by the highest levels of decisions-making authorities, positive examples should be presented as model solutions, and strong attempts should be made to aim all revitalization processes at that direction – only then will we be able to protect our heritage for future generations.

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